

STAT

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE A3

THE WASHINGTON POST
19 January 1982

White House Aide Calls In Government Spokesmen to 'Clarify' Press Rules

By Michael Getler
and George C. Wilson
Washington Post Staff Writers

White House communications director David R. Gergen called in the top public information officers from throughout the government last night for a meeting to "clarify" controversial new rules for contacts with the news media.

And defense officials said the Pentagon is considering administering lie-detector tests to its employees on a regular basis before giving them access to sensitive information that could leak to the press or result in other unauthorized disclosures.

On Jan. 12, President Reagan ordered a sharp crackdown on official contacts with the news media on national security matters. Yesterday, administration officials acknowledged that White House chief of staff James A. Baker III had sent a memo Jan. 6 to all top officials requiring them or anyone under their jurisdiction to clear all major television appearances or major print interviews on any subject with the White House beforehand.

Deputy White House press secretary Larry Speakes yesterday stressed that the Baker memo was clearly separate from the national security directives. He said it was not an attempt to control the flow of information, but reflected the administration's desire to know in advance when senior officials were to appear on television or discuss major policy issues in interviews. The policy, Speakes said, was a traditional one that needed to be restated.

Although the Baker memo seemed to provide a sweeping order to control press contact, Speakes said it should not be construed to mean that every press contact had to be approved by the White House.

The Pentagon's lie-detector suggestion came from retired Gen. Richard G. Stilwell, deputy undersecretary of defense for policy, but has not yet been adopted by Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger.

The idea is to institutionalize lie-detector tests before giving key defense personnel access to top secret material. One official compared the recommended practice to that followed by the Central Intelligence Agency for sensitive jobs.

Stilwell's recommendation comes amid a continuing Pentagon investigation of who told The Washington Post about what went on during a meeting of the Defense Resources Board Jan. 7. At that meeting, executives were informed that it could cost an extra \$750 billion over five years to buy the forces the Joint Chiefs of Staff say they would need to carry out civilian defense policies, including Reagan administration directives to prepare to fight in several parts of the world at once.

Deputy Defense Secretary Frank C. Carlucci, a former CIA executive who was said to be enraged by the estimate becoming public, ordered lie-detector tests to try to find out who talked about the supposedly secret meeting he had chaired. Pentagon sources said some people are refusing to take the tests, which are being "offered"—as the Pentagon

puts it—to everybody who was at the meeting, including the staffer who put the charts on the screen.

Henry E. Catto Jr., assistant secretary of defense for public affairs, has acknowledged that nothing that was published in The Post about the meeting jeopardized national security. Said Catto:

"I certainly wouldn't say for a minute that the particular DRB meeting dealing with the budget is likely to endanger national defense. It's the principle of the thing that we strenuously object to—the expression of minority opinion via leaks to the news media designed to influence the course of events. We feel that things ought to be decided in camera and then a policy supported by everyone who stays on the team. In most cases, it's not appropriate to have debate on national security issues in public."

Pressed on whether someone who refused to take the test would be suspect, Catto replied: "I don't think that there is anyone who would automatically assume that person is guilty. They have ethical objections to the whole idea. One can't generalize on that."

Pentagon officials said the review of the 1965 rules on administering polygraphs started last September. Congress insisted back then that the Pentagon curb its use of lie detectors. A key part of the 1965 directive states that "no polygraph examination shall be conducted unless the person . . . voluntarily consents, in writing" and no "adverse action" may be taken against someone for refusing to submit to a lie-detector test.